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SUBJECT: NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL KICKS OFF JOINT REVIEW OF COMMON SECURITY CHALLENGES WITH AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: DCM John Heffern for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶11. (C) Summary: The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) began its Joint Review of Common Security Challenges with a January 15 discussion on Afghanistan. NRC members agreed to include in the review efforts to stem the insurgency and narcotic trafficking, and support Afghan National Security Forces. Allies stressed the need to focus on areas in which the NRC could add value, and hoped the Joint Review could lead to increased Russian support for Afghanistan. Russia focused on the threat of Afghan narcotics, and reiterated a request for NATO to confer with the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Allies commented upon a recent OpEd by the Russian Ambassador criticizing NATO's efforts in Afghanistan. End summary.

Allies Focus on How NRC Can Have Value Added

¶12. (C) NATO Secretary General Rasmussen began the NRC's Joint Review of 21st Century Common Security Challenges with a January 15 Ambassadorial discussion of Afghanistan. The SecGen proposed that the NRC examine five specific issues related to Afghanistan: extremism and efforts to stem the insurgency, improving governance and capacity building, training and mentoring of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), narcotics, and improved international coordination.

¶13. (C) Several Allies stated that the Joint Review should focus upon areas in which the NRC could contribute to international efforts in Afghanistan. The U.S. and Canada suggested that the Joint Review address counter-narcotics efforts and obtaining material support for the ANSF, while the UK thought to look at these two areas and the Afghan national reconciliation process. The UK also hoped that the Joint Review would be an opportunity for Allies and Russia to formally state that Afghanistan was a shared threat.

¶14. (C) Norway thought that the Joint Review should examine counter-narcotics, supporting the ANSF, and countering the insurgency, but concluded that the NRC could not provide value added to the other topics proposed by the SecGen. Several Allies agreed, and pointed out that neither NATO nor ISAF played a major role in capacity building or international coordination, topics best left to the UN and other fora.

¶15. (C) Germany stated that the challenge would be to transfer the findings of the Joint Review into action, and thought that the initiative could help determine how Russia could

better assist the ANSF. Italy said that Russia could make a significant contribution to Afghanistan, and that delivering it through the NRC would send an important political message.

Allies Criticize Rogozin OpEd

¶ 16. (C) Allies rebuked Russian Ambassador Rogozin for a January 11 OpEd in the New York Times that unfavorably compared NATO to Soviet forces in Afghanistan, claiming that the Soviets sought to minimize civilian casualties whereas NATO preferred to "fight from the air" to limit its own casualties. The OpEd also criticized Allies for not being sufficiently dedicated to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, and claimed that the CSTO had created a rapid reaction force to respond "in case of a NATO fiasco" in Afghanistan. Some Allies noted that in his own, unique way, Rogozin had expressed support for NATO's success in Afghanistan. The UK observed, however, that there were "constructive and destructive" ways to convey such a message. Italy thought the OpEd was "out of step" with NATO's efforts to protect Afghan civilians.

Russia Focuses on Narcotics

¶ 17. (C) Russian Ambassador Rogozin covered terrorism and extremism, the disparity between the military and humanitarian needs of Afghanistan, and the role of Afghanistan's neighbors. He focused on the threat Afghan narcotics posed to Russia and Central Asia, called upon ISAF

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to better curb Afghan narcotics trafficking, and asked that NATO and the CSTO confer on counter-narcotics efforts. Rogozin reiterated the Russian request to be included in ISAF discussions on Afghanistan in order for Moscow to better understand political and strategic planning regarding that country's future, but stressed that Russia was not asking to be included in meetings of ISAF troop contributors or in tactical planning. Rogozin said little about his OpEd, other than to comment that in Russia it was seen as an expression of support for NATO's mission in Afghanistan.

¶ 18. (C) The SecGen concluded that there was general agreement to focus on extremism and efforts to stem the insurgency, supporting the ANSF, and counter-narcotics. He thought it would be a "mistake" to exclude capacity building and improved international coordination, and tasked the NRC Preparatory Committee to discuss these issues further. The SecGen did not address comments by the U.S. and other Allies that future Joint Review discussions should be carried out at a level other than Ambassadorial, and said that he would plan four more informal NRC meetings to discuss the other components of the initiative: terrorism, piracy, WMD, and natural and man-made disasters. The SecGen has called a meeting of NRC Ambassadors to discuss natural and man-made disasters on January 22.

DAALDER